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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001499

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SA](#) [IT](#) [ITALIAN](#) [POLITICS](#)

SUBJECT: THE DEPARTURE OF THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR TO RIYADH

-- THE INSIDE SCOOP

REF: RIYADH 1843

CLASSIFIED BY: ACTING POL MC GARY ROBBINS FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) POL OFF INQUIRED OF LUIGI MACCOTTA, THE MFA'S OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR THE GULF STATES, ABOUT THE "PREMATURE" DEPARTURE (REF A) OF THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR TO SAUDI ARABIA, TORQUATO CARDILLI, AND HIS REPLACEMENT BY ARMANDO SANGUINI (BIO TO FOLLOW SEPTEL.) MACCOTTA, VERY CANDID IN HIS RESPONSE, SAID THAT CARDILLI WAS IN AN "EMBARRASSING POSITION." A YEAR AND HALF AGO HE WANTED TO VISIT MECCA, SO HE "FORGED DOCUMENTS, AND DISGUISED HIMSELF AS A MUSLIM." HE WAS CAUGHT BY THE SAUDI AUTHORITIES, AND SO "CONVERTED TO ISLAM TO AVOID FURTHER TROUBLE." THAT WAS A CAUSE OF INEFFECTIVENESS FOR THE ITALIAN MISSION IN THE KINGDOM AS CARDILLI "BECAME AN ADVOCATE OF SAUDI POSITIONS INSTEAD OF PURSUING ITALIAN INTERESTS," SAID MACCOTTA. THE ITALIAN MFA, "IN ORDER NOT TO BE PERCEIVED AS ANTI-MUSLIM," THEN HAD TO WAIT BEFORE REMOVING CARDILLI FROM THE KINGDOM, TWO AND A HALF YEARS AFTER THE BEGINNING OF HIS TERM, EXPLAINED MACCOTTA. SEMBLER

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